



Board of Commissioners

Donnie Boyd, Commissioner
Position One

Kelley Minty Morris, Commissioner
Position Two

Derrick DeGroot, Commissioner
Position Three

May 17, 2021

Honorable Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources Republican Office
U.S. House of Representatives
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington D.C., 20515

Honorable Cliff Bentz
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife
U.S. House of Representatives
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington D.C., 20515

Re: Virtual forum on the catastrophic drought situation across the American West

Dear Ranking Member Westerman, Ranking Subcommittee Member Bentz, and Natural Resources Committee Republicans:

I am Donnie Boyd, Klamath County, Oregon County Commissioner, position #1, and a lifelong resident of Klamath County. Thank you for having this forum today on a topic that is vital to my county and the entire Klamath Basin.

For 150 years, irrigated agriculture has been the primary economic engine in our county. There are approximately 200,000 irrigated acres in areas that are tributary to and surrounding Upper Klamath Lake. There are about 140,000 acres in Klamath County that are served by the Bureau of Reclamation's Klamath Project, which was authorized in 1905.

Today, that economy is shut down. Surface water irrigation is shut down. Family farms, farm employees, businesses that serve agriculture, and main street in our rural communities are all at risk, and terrified, through no fault of their own. National wildlife refuges that rely on the same water delivery system as irrigation will have no water.

This year is the worst, or close to the worst, drought year in memory. With that said, irrigation will receive essentially no share of what water there is. In the Klamath Project, for example, irrigation and wildlife refuges combined will use less than 10 percent of the water that flows into Upper Klamath Lake, the Project's water storage reservoir.

We have concerns with how and why this has come to be; water that has been used for irrigation in the past has been re-allocated to instream use. Those instream uses are very important, but there is no evidence that the complete drying up of agriculture is doing any good for the fish.

That issue is for another time.



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Today, I want you to know that on May 7, the Klamath County Board of Commissioners and the Siskiyou and the Modoc Counties Boards of Supervisors held a joint meeting. To anyone's knowledge, this is the first time ever that those three counties, which share the irrigated land in the Klamath Project, met together.

The three boards unanimously approved a letter to our Congressional delegation, which I have attached to this testimony. The Boards identified the immediate need for financial resources to try to limit the damage to the extent it can be limited. The sooner we can get that help the more-good it will do and less bad the disaster will be.

There is one update to the letter. The irrigation water supply will be even less than we thought. The A Canal, which has conveyed irrigation water for 150,000 acres since 1907, is closed, and will remain closed all year. The A Canal and others also provide recharge for domestic wells that are relied on for drinking water and sanitation. There are 1800 domestic wells in the area influenced by the water shut-off, and we have no idea what is going to happen or exactly how many will go dry.

Please take into careful consideration the negative impact these decisions have created in the Klamath Basin community specifically effecting ag, local businesses and residential domestic wells. The three county letter states there is a need for 45 million. The actual impact is much more.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Donnie Boyd". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Donnie Boyd
Commissioner

Enc: Letter from Klamath, Modoc and Siskiyou Counties



May 7, 2021

The Honorable Doug LaMalfa
The Honorable Cliff Bentz
The Honorable Ron Wyden
The Honorable Jeff Merkley
The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
The Honorable Alex Padilla
The Honorable Brian Dahle
The Honorable Megan Dahle
The Honorable E. Werner Reschke
The Honorable Dennis Linthicum

RE: 2021 Klamath Project Irrigation Season

Dear Congressmen and Senators:

As you are aware, Klamath Project irrigators are at the beginning of a disastrous water year where the Bureau of Reclamation has announced 33,000 acre-feet of available irrigation supply from Upper Klamath Lake, less than 10% of needed project deliveries. In recent weeks, based on deteriorating hydrology, even this projected amount now appears to be optimistic. This means that hundreds of family farms will not be able to produce the crops and livestock that have not only been the hallmark of the Klamath Basin, but that also provide food and fiber throughout the world. In addition, and just as importantly, thousands of farm and ranch workers will be left without employment, and businesses that rely on active farming and ranching will experience a profound decrease in business. Sadly, our National Wildlife Refuges will also suffer, which will have far-ranging implications up and down the Pacific Flyway.

In order to assist irrigators through this season so that they may be able to continue their operations into the future, we request a minimum of \$45 million for funding programs of the Klamath Project Drought Response Agency (DRA). At this time there is \$15 million available, for funding programs, leaving a shortfall of \$30 million. We urge you to continue to work together with your colleagues and with the Administration to identify and/or earmark additional funding for farmers and ranchers in the Klamath Project.

We are also concerned about the fractured conditions in the basin. Our three counties have sent elected County Commissioners and Supervisors to countless meetings and participated in processes intended to spur collaboration on the solution scale that is needed for our watershed. In fact, each of our counties have contributed funds for professional facilitation in support of these activities. We had hoped that forums of this type could at least produce consensus-based communications as to the best uses of federal dollars to promote a more stable future for Basin resources and communities. That hope has diminished, and we fear that the severe crisis some of our communities' face has been exploited by outside interests and employed as a means of requesting


pet projects that lack consensus, particularly within our own counties. We would welcome the power of your offices in channeling parties toward constructive prioritization of real needs. With that said, we are aware that tribal and non-tribal fishing communities have identified a need for disaster relief. Recognizing the many arguments about the causes of depleted fisheries, we support all efforts to pursue financial assistance for those resource-dependent communities for injury they may experience.

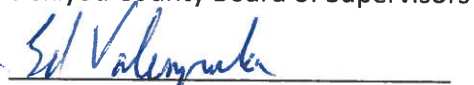
We ask that you work together to help unify our agricultural communities. The current situation can easily and unintentionally lead to individual interests seeking to desperately utilize every drop of water and/or attempting to secure every limited dollar of available funding. We know from past experience – namely, the disastrous 2001 curtailment of Klamath Project water – that this will surely contribute to competition between neighbors and splintering of our rural communities. The devastating 2001 water curtailment provided some other lessons we should heed. Outside interests – from both sides of the political spectrum – will attempt to use this crisis to advance their own particular agendas, quite possibly to the detriment of our communities. We urge that you continue to work with us to ensure that these outside interests do not detract from real, meaningful solutions that can only come from those at the local level who truly understand the critical issues facing our counties this year.


Irrigators will rightly be focused on protecting their livelihoods and businesses. Your leadership is critical during this time and can help fill the inevitable void that will soon emerge. We know that continuing the legacy of family farms and ranches is a top priority for you all. We stand ready to offer any assistance in support of your efforts to secure needed funding and promote unity in our communities as we all navigate our way through this devastating water year.

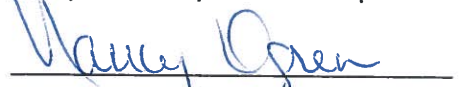
Sincerely,


Ray A. Haupt, Chair
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors



Brandon Criss, District 1
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors

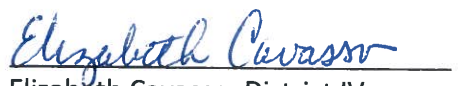

Ed Valenzuela, District 2
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors

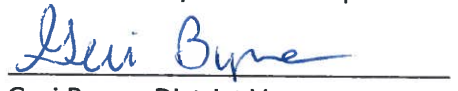

Michael N. Kobseff, District 3
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors


Nancy Ogren, District 4
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors


Ned Coe, Chair
Modoc County Board of Supervisors


Patricia Cullins, District II
Modoc County Board of Supervisors


Elizabeth Cavasso, District IV
Modoc County Board of Supervisors


Geri Byrne, District V
Modoc County Board of Supervisors


Derrick DeGroot, Vice-Chair
Klamath County Commissioners


Donnie Boyd, Commissioner
Klamath County Commissioners

cc: Secretary Deb Haaland, Department of Interior